

WHATCOM COUNTY CREP PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE

As entities representing the administration and policy development of CREP, we the undersigned agree to the following program philosophy and management guideline. It is understood that all of us believe the CREP program in Whatcom County is an important program to some landowner/operators in the Whatcom County area. However, based on funding, eligibility requirement and program content, it is also recognized that it is just one piece of the myriad of offerings and services provided by participating agencies.

While achievement of 100% funding for all applicants is a laudable goal, such application acceptance may not be feasible or practical in light of political and economic realities. Despite those drawbacks, the undersigned commit to the embracing of the program and agree that during contentious discussions or disappointing determinations, an agreement to disagree can be done in a professional and respectful manner. While all communication and documentation about the program may not always be positive, the parties and their staff will continue to view all programs in light of their roles and the importance of those roles to the local community. Additionally, all parties will continue to recognize the importance of conserving natural resources.

AGENCY ROLES AND PROCEDURES

We believe the first step in understanding a program and its benefits to the local community is to understand the roles played by the individual partners. We agree the 2 CRP manual recognizes and defines those roles and responsibilities. Appendix A to this document details those roles and responsibilities.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Based on the above explanation of duties, the undersigned, individually and collectively are committed to providing adequate and simplified information to land owners and to additional staff. To that end, by the second monthly meeting of this group, representatives will develop a draft decision tree outlining acceptable criteria for eligible landowner/operators. The decision tree will provide eligibility guidelines, conservation district planning criteria and COC substantive details noting compliance with policy guidelines. Such identification must deal with the items of cover, land size, cost efficiency, and landowner/operator eligibility. Further definition of COC criteria related to contract disapproval for any of the above items also is to be provided. Additionally, fundamental project elements designed to promote program acceptance will be identified in the decision tree.

The entities agree on the wording of the contact language and the documentation used to explain the program to landowner/operators. Additionally when there is a potential for significant impact on other partners, there should be discussion between the partners before the correspondence is mailed. That discussion should occur outside of the landowner/operators presence.

The parties note that consistency with regard to CREP eligibility is of primary importance. While it is recognized that eligibility may be denied for independent rational reasons, all efforts will be made to provide a consistent determination of eligibility based on the facts involved, compliance with program outlines, and community benefits. The chain of command will be followed should a denial of an application be forwarded to the landowner/operator. Through this agreement, it is required that the conservation district will receive a copy of the adverse determination letter when the letter is provided to the landowner/operator. While the CD may ask questions of the state office of the FSA concerning a local denial which the staff feels may have been inconsistent or inappropriate, appeals shall go forward as prescribed by regulation.

STAFF AND PROGRAM EMBRACEMENT

It is urged by the undersigned that FSA and the Whatcom County District spend time developing a goal statement for this program. Additionally, the undersigned parties agree to hold a series of joint meetings to allow for increased employee understanding of this program as well as other common employment interests. Staff meetings will be held monthly through the remainder of this year and quarterly thereafter. Potential agenda items are:

- *Review of roles as identified in Appendix A
- *Landowner/operator contract review
- *Review state contract
- *Program goals
- *Decision tree
- *Landowner/operator contact correspondence
- *Technical issues
- *Plan detail
- *Appendix B

Some of the meetings may include out of county agencies to allow for increased communication between those involved with FSA programs. There are also to be discussions about the potential for team (success) building exercises to be held by departmental staff. Joint training or workshops on this and other programs may be determined as necessary. Specifically, all parties will embrace the goals identified on the state and federal level as identified in Appendix B. Externally, the program will be enhanced through community forums, press releases, and potential agency tours of selected areas.

VISIONARY ADMINISTRATIVE FLEXIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

The parties to this agreement believe that the CREP program has grown to the point where a review of its program successes and failures should be conducted. Specifically, the areas of administrative review (what's working and what isn't), technical review (prescription and achievement goals), financial review (cost effectiveness compared to other programs and local prices), and program review (what successes are available as this program is examined in relation to outside activities, ie: fish and water flow) are to be examined. FSA and Conservation will decide by November 1, 2006 if an independent audit is appropriate and necessary.

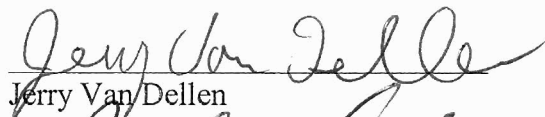
The parties note that at some point it may be possible to provide an administrative officer to specialize in CREP program activities on a multi county basis. While such a proposal may appear to be challenging in light of present funding, the parties agree it could be beneficial.


GENERAL PROVISION

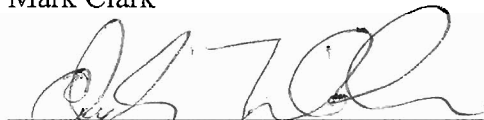
The parties agree to respect the roles and responsibilities of each entity in the administration of the CREP program. Further, as with all FSA, NRCS, District and Commission programs, the parties agree that a CAN DO attitude is one of the great attributes they bring to the table. Through a commitment to this agreement, there is a strong sense that clarity to the CREP administration process will allow the program to serve the local community, and the parties to use their professionalism to provide service in a cost effective and flexible manner.

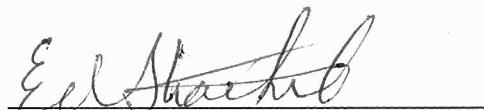
The parties will reconvene as a group in four months to discuss this agreement, completions of details contained herein, and establish future agreements concerning CREP.

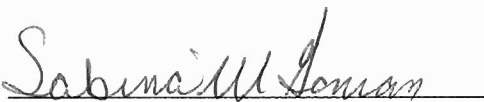
Dated this 31st day of August, 2006



Jerry Van Dellen


Mark Clark



Chuck Timblin


Ed Strachila



Sabina Gouran



Wayne Chaudiere

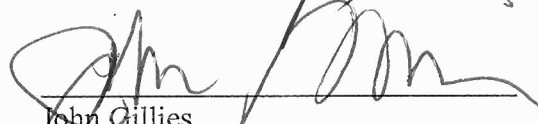

Darcy Maldonado

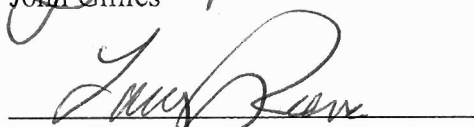

Andy Slipper


Bob Barker


Rod Hamilton


George Boggs


John Gillies


Larry Reeves